Ferdinand Braun: A Life of the Nobel Prizewinner and Inventor of the Cathode-Ray Oscilloscope. Friedrich Kurylo and Charles Susskind. 289 pp. MIT Press, 1981. $29.95.

In 1909, the Nobel Prize for Physics was awarded to Guglielmo Marconi and Ferdinand Braun, "in recognition of their contributions to wireless telegraphy." Of Marconi's early competitors, Braun had been one of the most important, contributing significant new circuitry and also participating in the commercial development of the fledgling technology. Braun also made other noteworthy contributions to science and technology, among them the following: he was the first to successfully utilize a cathode ray tube as an oscilloscope, studying alternating currents through their magnetic deflection of the cathode ray beam in 1897; and he discovered, back in the 1870s, the rectifier effect that underlies the crystal detector and various modern solid state devices.

In spite of all this, Braun has not been much remembered, and the present biography was undertaken to remedy the situation. (This is a revised edition of the German original, published in 1965.) The presentation gives excellent insight into the life of a German physics professor around the turn of the century, and into the science-technology nexus in Germany at that time. Unfortunately, however, the text's partisan orientation toward its subject, taken together with the sometimes inadequate treatment of technical matters, leaves the reader with the feeling that he cannot rely on the historical judgments made, although they may well be correct for the most part.—*Daniel M. Siegel, History of Science, University of Wisconsin*